

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN RESPONSE TO
LOVE/AFFECTION IN EROTICA

by

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SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE APPROVAL

FINAL READING APPROVAL

of a thesis submitted by

Debra M. Quackenbush

This thesis has been read by each member of the following supervisory committee and by majority vote has been found to be satisfactory

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THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH GRADUATE SCHOOL

ABSTRACT

FINAL READING APPROVAL

To the Graduate Council of The University of Utah:

I have read the thesis of Debra M. Quackenbush in its final form and have found that (1) its format, citations, and bibliographic style are consistent and acceptable; (2) its illustrative materials including figures, tables, and charts are in place; and (3) the final manuscript is satisfactory to the Supervisory Committee and is ready for submission to The Graduate School.

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ABSTRACT

There has been little empirical research concerning gender differences in response to sexually explicit video material. The present study tested the hypothesis that women, rather than men, were more responsive to explicit erotica with a romantic theme. As part of a larger study, 42 male and 34 female college students, 21 years of age and older, viewed one of two 5-minute video vignettes taken from a commercially available X-rated video tape. The sexually explicit portions of the two vignettes were essentially identical; the vignettes differed only in that the high romance condition included (a) dialogue expressing caring and affection between the partners and (b) more kissing and nongenital touching.

Results indicated that contrary to expectations, both male and female subjects rated the explicit/romantic vignette as significantly more arousing than the explicit/nonromantic vignette (4.13 vs. 3.17 on a 7-point scale). These findings were consistent with other recent studies that suggested both men and women reported being moderately aroused by highly explicit audio-visual sexual material. This finding is consistent with the recent movement to romanticize highly explicit sexual material.

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I would like to thank my committee, Charles Turner, Ray Kesner, and, in particular, my chairperson, Don Strassberg, for their aid and guidance in helping me complete this thesis. Furthermore, I also would like to thank J. D. Gill for his encouragement and support. Hite (1976), women enjoyed the romantic and emotional aspects of sexual relationships more than men and, perhaps, even required that love and affection existed before they were motivated to engage in sexual relations. Indeed, some data indicated that women looked less favorably on sexual expression outside of a romantic relationship than did men (Peplau, Rubin & Hill, 1977). Research investigating gender differences in fantasy behavior suggested that men and women fantasized about different themes with respect to sex (Ellis & Symons, 1990). For example, the fantasies of women were found to contain more affection and commitment themes (Pryzbyla, Byrne & Kelley, 1983).

Social Learning

One potential theoretical framework that attempted to account for gender differences in sexual behavior was social learning (Bandura and Walters, 1963). In any society, males and females may be differentially allowed,

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Review of Literature

It is widely assumed that men and women value certain aspects of sex and relationships in different manners (Nichols, 1988). According to Hite (1976), women enjoyed the romantic and emotional aspects of sexual relationships more than men and, perhaps, even required that love and affection existed before they were motivated to engage in sexual relations. Indeed, some data indicated that women looked less favorably on sexual expression outside of a romantic relationship than did men (Peplau, Rubin & Hill, 1977). Research investigating gender differences in fantasy behavior suggested that men and women fantasized about different themes with respect to sex (Ellis & Symons, 1990). For example, the fantasies of women were found to contain more affection and commitment themes (Pryzbyla, Byrne & Kelley, 1983).

Social Learning

One potential theoretical framework that attempted to account for gender differences in sexual behavior was social learning (Bandura and Walters, 1963). In any society, males and females may be differentially allowed,

expected, or even encouraged to engage in particular types of sexual behavior. These gender-specific expectations may be obvious or subtle, explicit or implicit, yet their influence should be felt throughout a society. For example, these different expectations existing within a culture may be expressed in child rearing practices as well as in attitudes held by adults of this culture regarding their own sexual double-standards. Studies, rated by both males and females, determined that women described as sexually active were perceived in a negative manner in comparison to nonsexually active women (Garcia & Derfel, 1983). However, this difference was not evident when sexually active men were compared with nonsexually active men. Given this difference in attitudes toward sexuality, it was not surprising to find that women reported more sexual guilt than do males (Mosher, 1979). Basow (1986) examined parental attitudes and behavior toward their children with respect to the expression of sexuality. Parents of adolescent males had different beliefs and expectations regarding their children's sexual behavior than did parents of adolescent females. In particular, parents of females (1) were more restrictive of the females' sexual behavior and (2) saw their sexual behavior as being more rebellious (Basow, 1986).

Rules regarding gender differences in the expression of adult sexuality may be more complex than previous

descriptions might suggest (Peplau et al., 1977). The acceptability of sexual expression on the part of one or both sexes may be, in part, a function of the context in which the behavior occurs. For instance, female sexual behavior was normally seen as socially acceptable as long as it occurred within committed relationships (i.e., marriage), whereas socially acceptable male sexual behavior was often less restricted. According to Peplau et al. (1977), although males demonstrated more positive attitudes toward casual sexual relations than did females, males and females did not differ in attitudes toward sex within a relationship. Therefore, it would appear that women (more than men) learned, as a function of both what society and their parents taught them, that sex within committed relationships was probably acceptable, whereas sex outside of relationships was not. According to this theory, it would appear that, when compared to men, women experienced more guilt and discomfort when sex occurred outside of a committed relationship.

Gender Differences Toward Erotica

These proposed gender differences in sexual attitudes and expectations have led some researchers to hypothesize a related pattern in response to sexually explicit materials. Indeed, some believed that females (compared to males), required expressions of commitment (i.e., love, affection)

in order for them to maximize their enjoyment and/or arousal of sexually explicit materials.

A small body of research was conducted on gender differences in response to sexually explicit materials. Most of this material simply focused on sex differences in the consumption of and reaction to explicit material, when considered as a whole. However, a few researchers attempted to examine the extent to which specific themes (i.e., romantic or relationship) affected response. Early survey data supported the existing stereotype that women did not consume or enjoy sexually explicit materials as much as men did (Abelson, Cohen, Heaton & Suder, 1971). Others (Kinsey, Pomeroy & Martin, 1953) suggested that this difference was evident because women found most of the available, explicit material to lack the themes (i.e., love, affection) that they wanted to see in a sexual relationship. This observation seemed to support the notion of a romantic buffer, or the acceptability of erotic material consumption for females, as long as it contained certain relationship themes. Of course, problems with survey data often occur and are probably exacerbated in the study of human sexuality. It is difficult to determine that the erotica to which different subjects are responding is even comparable. In addition, researchers can never be sure that subjects are not withholding or distorting information (i.e., for social desirability reasons).

Societal attitudes, more accepting of sexual expression in males than in females, may make for a differential willingness to answer questions truthfully and completely. For example, males may be inclined to overreport the frequency and nature of their sexual behavior while females may be more inclined to underreport it. Furthermore, because much of the available survey data is now outdated, it is difficult to determine appropriate current results. Not only is contemporary behavior considerably different, but it is also likely that the explicit material that subjects are reporting is different from previous material. In terms of explicitness alone, today's erotica is more graphic. In addition, the medium of presentation (i.e., magazines, 8mm black and white films) has advanced to use of color videos. This may be a particularly important difference given that research (Abel, Barlow, Blanchard & Mavissaklian, 1975; Sakheim, Barlow, Beck & Abrahamson, 1985; Sandford, 1974) demonstrated that explicit videotapes produced significantly more sexual arousal than other types of explicit media.

As is typically the case in the study of human sexuality, investigators eventually moved away from interviews and surveys and into the lab in order to study potential gender differences in response to sexually explicit material. The advantages of experimental data are well known. The ability to manipulate variables allows

researchers to ascertain the material to which the subjects are responding, as well as denoting the ability to attribute causality. The experiments conducted within this study utilized questionnaires as opposed to interviews as the data gathering technique (Appendix A). This is an important methodological issue, particularly in sex research because the questionnaires may (1) yield data less subject to investigator bias and (2) result in more honest and more complete subject responses (owing to anonymity).

The first experimental study that manipulated thematic content of explicit material and examined its interaction with gender was conducted by Jakobovits (1965). Erotic literature was constructed in such a way as to represent the categories of relationship-context erotica (defined as having more information about the characters and their relationship and less explicit language) and nonrelationship-context erotica (defined as having a lesser focus on the relationship between the male and female portrayed and a greater focus on sexual elements) (Jakobovits, 1965). Contrary to the survey research of the 40 subjects (20 males and 20 females), it was determined that while the men, ranging in age from 21-31, and all acquainted with the researcher, rated the relationship-context erotica significantly more arousing than the nonrelationship-context erotica; the opposite was true for females. In fact, under the nonrelationship-

context erotica condition, women rated the literature as significantly more arousing than did men.

In an attempt to replicate Jakobovits' (1965) findings, Englar and Walker (1973) had subjects read small, select, portions of the original stories that Jakobovits used. However, this replication was not successful, as no significant main effects or interactions associated with gender or theme were demonstrated. Similar failures to find either gender differences or main or interactive effects for romantic thematic manipulation were reported by Schmidt, Sigusch and Schafer (1973). Heiman (1977), using only female subjects and audiotapes as stimulus material, also failed to observe any significant main effects due to romantic theme.

One feature common to all of the previously mentioned experimental studies was their reliance on nonvisual sexual stimuli (i.e., literature and audiotapes). These modes of presentation represented the primary erotic materials of the time. Furthermore, literature and audiotapes allowed for perfect control of the manipulated variables. However, the potential problem associated with this type of stimulus is twofold. Failure to observe gender differences to erotic material in most of these studies may, in part, be a function of the material itself. For example, erotic literature (the most common material

used in these studies) produced relatively low levels of arousal in experimental situations (Sandford, 1974). Perhaps these earlier studies simply produced too low a level of arousal to be sensitive to possible gender effects. In addition, this type of stimulus material probably had little comparability to contemporary, sexually explicit media. During the 1980s the primary source of sexually explicit material was commercial videotape. This material is so different from literature, slides or magazines that it is almost impossible to generalize the results using the nonvideo material (used in almost all prior research) compared to the erotic videos of the early 1990s. Fisher and Byrne (1978) conducted the only experimental study on gender effects in response to erotic material in which the stimulus was a sexually explicit film. All subjects viewed the same film segment, but they also read one of three written scripts, presumably describing the nature of the relationship between the individuals depicted in the film: (1) The couple was married and very loving to each other (romantic theme); (2) the woman was a prostitute and the man was a paying client (libidinous theme); and (3) the couple met at a party, became attracted to one another, went home together and engaged in sexual relations (casual sex theme) (Fisher & Byrne, 1978). Despite the use of films, results revealed no main or interaction effects involving gender. However,

there was a main effect for thematic content. The casual sex theme significantly elicited more subjective arousal (for both men and women) than either the romantic or the libidinous themes, which did not differ from each other. It is important, however, to note the specific nature of their experimental manipulation. Thematic content was not manipulated within the film. Rather, it was manipulated using a written scenario. It is difficult to determine what effect, if any, this had on the outcome. Manipulating the independent variables in this way possibly primed the subjects to the hypothesis (i.e., encouraged them to think about the written scenario as separate from the film itself). Furthermore, it is unclear what the subjects were responding to. That is, were they responding to the written introduction and film as a whole, or were they responding only to the introduction (i.e., the description was possibly more erotic than the film itself)?

Regardless, the lack of integration of the film and the written introduction possibly represented a less ecologically valid method than did that of manipulating theme within the context of the film. In the real world, consumers do not have written introductions to erotic films or videos that they view. At the present time, there is no research that manipulated these variables in this integrated fashion.

Another potentially important weakness discussed in previous studies was the failure to evaluate the effectiveness of the experimental manipulations. The researchers did not determine whether subjects were able to detect the particular thematic differences that were manipulated in the presented stimuli. This failure to perform a manipulation check brought the construct validity of their independent variables into question. It is not clear as to whether the subjects perceived the thematic manipulation in the same manner as did the researchers. Therefore, previous failures to identify a gender effect in response to the explicit material possibly reflected a failure of the primary manipulation.

Summary

In summary, the available literature on gender effects leaves the question unanswered: Do women (more than men) need a love and affection theme in their erotica in order to maximize its sexually arousing properties? While the survey supported the hypothesis that such differences existed, the general limits of such research and its specific limitations in the area of human sexuality left the question open. The best of this research (Kinsey et al., 1953) was conducted so long ago (with media diametrically different from 1990's media coverage) as to render its findings of questionable value regarding

understanding reactions to contemporary explicit sexual material. (2) utilizing manipulation checks to test the cons The few experimental studies that examined gender differences with respect to erotica, failed to find any evidence that women want or need more romance than do men (Englar & Walker, 1973; Fisher & Byrne, 1978; Heiman, 1977; Schmidt et al., 1973). Aside from the initial research (Jakobovits, 1965), no gender differences were demonstrated. Yet, this research is not without features that seriously limited its validity and power to detect difference. dependent variable while males' arousal remained

This thesis seeks to explore further potential gender differences in response to sexually explicit material when a love/affection theme is manipulated. In addition, it also seeks to explore the potential moderating effects of sexual explicitness, a variable that received little or no attention in the previous body of literature. Certainly, not all sexually oriented materials (i.e., videos) are equally explicit; they do not pay equal attention to the intricacies of genital-to-genital or other sexual contact.

Informal inspection of random examples of contemporary erotic material suggested that explicitness and romance were often inversely related in many of these erotic films and videos. Therefore, the decision was made to include it as an independent variable in the present study. The current research attempted to improve upon the existing

research by (1) including explicitness as an independent variable, (2) utilizing manipulation checks to test the construct validity of the independent variables, (3) using video vignettes as stimuli to elicit the most powerful response, and (4) manipulating the primary independent variables (i.e., love/affection, explicitness) within the vignettes themselves.

The following hypothesis was tested:

Females' arousal to erotic video vignettes was greater with the addition of love/affection as an independent variable while males' arousal remained unchanged.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

Subjects

A total of 164 introductory psychology students (91 males, 73 females), ranging in age from 21 to 62 (mean age = 26.87), participated in this study. Of these, 54% were single, 34% were married, and 12% were divorced, separated, or widowed. All subjects were given extra credit toward their grades in Psychology 101 in exchange for their participation.

Questionnaires

A questionnaire, developed specifically for this study, was administered after the presentation of each video segment (Appendix A). The Video Reaction Questionnaire (VRQ) was designed to assess subjective estimates of sexual arousal as well as other variables related to the segments shown (i.e., manipulation checks of the independent variables--love/affection, explicitness). The VRQ consisted of 17, seven-point, Likert-type items. The VRQ, designed to measure the primary dependent variable, sexual arousal, asked the following questions.

1. "How sexually arousing did you find this segment?"

1 = "not at all arousing" to 7 = "very arousing."

2. "How much love and affection did this couple display?" 1 = "none at all" to 7 = "a great deal."
3. "How explicit did you find this segment to be?" 1 = "not at all explicit" to 7 = "very explicit."
4. "How arousing do you think men in general would find this segment to be?" 1 = "not at all arousing" to 7 = "very arousing."
5. "How arousing do you think women in general would find this segment to be?" 1 = "not at all arousing" to 7 = "very arousing."

In addition, three open-ended questions were asked of the subjects:

1. "What effect, if any, did the presence of other people in the room have on how arousing you found this segment to be?"
2. "Please write any comments you have about any of the above factors which may have particularly influenced your arousal to this film."
3. "If there are any other factors which you can think of which may have influenced your arousal, please indicate them here."

Demographic information was solicited (i.e., gender, age, marital status, sexual preference (male/female), and experience with sexually explicit videos (Appendix A). Finally, The Sexual Opinion Survey (SOS) (White, Fisher, Byrne & Kingman, 1977) was used in this study as a measure

of sexual attitudes (i.e., comfort with sexual topics) (Appendix A). The SOS consisted of 21 Likert-type items, each scored on a seven-point scale, ranging from 0 (agree strongly) to 7 (disagree strongly). It included items such as "I think it would be very entertaining to look at hard-core pornography" and "If people thought that I was interested in oral sex, I would be embarrassed." High scores on the SOS (suggested greater comfort with sexual topics and a more liberal attitude concerning sexuality) have negatively correlated with measures of sex guilt (Fisher, Byrne, White & Kelley, 1988), positively correlated with affective response to erotica (Kelley and Musialowski, 1986), and positively correlated with the number of sexual partners (Fisher, 1984). In this present study, a median split on SOS scores was used to divide subjects into relatively erotophilic (high SOS) and relatively erotophobic (low SOS) sexual attitude groups. Because previous research indicated that men and women may differ in their scores on the SOS, separate median splits were used for males and females in this study. The average scores of these subjects (males = 71, females = 60) were similar to those obtained from other college students and adults in the United States (Fisher et al., 1988).

same). Hence, there were Videos of four segments (high explicitness, low explicitness, high love/affection, low love/affection). The sexually explicit material used in this study consisted of 2- to 4-minute color video segments taken from commercially available videos. A baseline segment, seen by all the subjects, portrayed a couple engaging in sexual intercourse for approximately three minutes. No indication of the characters' relationship to each other was given in this video. This video was highly explicit (i.e., containing many close-ups of genitals and genital-to-genital contact). It was hoped that the subjects would acclimate themselves to the research environment and the experimental task during this time.

Experimental video vignettes were selected to satisfy four possible combinations of the manipulated independent variables, love/affection and explicitness. The two high explicitness segments depicted substantial amounts of genital-to-genital contact; the two low explicitness videos showed no such contact (i.e., intercourse was depicted from longer shots of the couple). One each of the high and low explicit videos also had a high love/affection theme present (i.e., the characters said the words "I love you" and demonstrated hugging, kissing, and substantial amounts of presexual, nonsexual and nongenital physical contact). To create the low love/affection condition for each of these videos, the romantic displays were simply edited out of the segment (i.e., the sexual depictions remained the

same). Hence, there were a total of four segments (high explicitness, high love/affection; high explicitness, low love/affection; low explicitness, high love/affection; low explicitness, low love/affection) of which a subject could see only one (i.e., a between-subjects design). Each segment lasted 2 and 4 minutes. A detailed description of each the video segments follows.

Video One--High Explicitness,
High Love/Affection

In this video, the male partner enters the female's house and brings her flowers. There is quite a bit of affectionate dialogue, and the characters are portrayed as a committed, engaged couple. There is a great deal of hugging and kissing in the hallway. They then move to the bedroom where they are shown drinking champagne together. Sexual interaction begins and genital-to-genital contact is portrayed. Total running time = 3:35.

Video Two--High Explicitness,
Low Love/Affection

This video is identical to Video One except that the presexual contact (i.e., flowers, champagne, hugging) is omitted. Total running time = 2:25.

Video Three--Low Explicitness,

High Love/Affection

In this video, a couple is presented hugging and saying "I love you." The male is shown taking a day off from work so that he can spend time with the female. He carries her to a couch and sexual contact begins. No genital-to-genital contact is portrayed, here. Total running time = 4:00.

Video Four--Low Explicitness,

Low Love/Affection

This video is identical to Video Three except that the presexual contact is edited out of the video. Total running time = 2:10.

Design and Procedure

The independent variables consisted of (1) love/affection (high vs. low), (2) explicitness (high vs. low), (3) gender and (4) sexual attitudes (relatively erotophilic vs. relatively erotophobic). The primary dependent variables were subjective estimates of sexual arousal.

Subjects were placed in classrooms reserved specifically for this study. All subjects were made fully aware that they were going to be watching sexually explicit video vignettes when they signed the consent form (Appendix B). When the subjects arrived at the study location, they

were seated in every other seat (to enhance response anonymity) and were handed a consent form. Both a male and a female research assistant controlled each set of subjects. Subject groups were limited to six, the maximum size that allowed for all individuals to see the television monitor. Subjects were instructed to read along with the experimenter as the consent form (Appendix B) was read aloud. They were reminded that they (1) would be watching sexually explicit material, (2) could leave the experiment at any time, and (3) were free to leave objectionable questions unanswered. Only two subjects (whose data are not included) chose to leave the experiment before answering the final questionnaire. Subjects were told on both the sign-up form and the consent form that the purpose of the experiment was to "investigate reactions to erotica." After completion of the consent form, lights in the room were shut off and the baseline video was shown. After the presentation of the video, the lights were switched on again and the subjects were given a Video Reaction Questionnaire (VRQ) in order to record their reactions to the segment.

After each subject had completed the VRQ, the second video segment was shown. This segment was randomly selected from one of the four experimental video segments. After the video, another VRQ was handed out and subjects were again instructed to evaluate the segment they had just

viewed. Subjects were then given the final demographic questionnaire and the SOS (White et al., 1977). After all subjects had completed the final questionnaire, they were debriefed (Appendix C), thanked, and dismissed.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

Experimental Films

As an informal, preliminary method of evaluating the effectiveness of the love/affection manipulation, a pair of raters viewed and rated each video segment on the following dimensions: (1) number of kisses in the segment, (2) amount of time actors embraced in the segment, (3) number of verbal expressions of affection and (4) "other" for any expressions of love/affection that did not fall into the previous three categories. Inspection of the data, as shown in Table 1, revealed that the two high love/affection segments do appear to have more displays of this construct than the low love/affection segments.

Two formal sets of analyses were also conducted in order to evaluate the effectiveness of both the experimental manipulations--explicitness and love/affection. The effectiveness of the explicitness manipulation was evaluated using 2 (high vs. low explicitness) X 2 (high vs. low love/affection) X 2 (gender) Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) procedure, with subjects' ratings of explicitness (to the experimental

Table 1
A Content Analysis of the Video Segments

Behavior	S1	S2	S3	S4
Kissing (frequency)	8	1	21	6
Verbal Expressions (frequency)	19	5	5	0
Embracing (duration in seconds)	1:00	:05	1:12	:03
Other	3	1	2	1

Note: S1 = high love/affection, high explicitness video.
 S2 = low love/affection, high explicitness video.
 S3 = high love/affection, low explicitness video.
 S4 = low love/affection, low explicitness video.

video) as the dependent variable and two covariates, explicitness ratings of the baseline film and sexual attitudes as measured by the SOS. As noted in Table 2, there was a main effect for the explicitness manipulation, $F(1,145) = 51.47, p < .001$. Subjects rated the high explicit video as substantially and significantly more sexually explicit than the low explicit video (4.5 vs. 3.3). However, there was also an unexpected main effect with the love/affection manipulation, $F(1,145) = 4.95, p < .05$. The high love/affection video was rated as being slightly, yet significantly more sexually explicit than the low love/affection video (4.03 vs. 3.78).

The effectiveness of the love/affection manipulation was evaluated with an analysis identical to that described with the following exceptions: (1) The dependent variable was the subjects' ratings of love/affection (to the experimental video), and (2) the covariates were love/affection ratings to the baseline film and sexual attitudes (SOS). Results, as indicated in Table 3, revealed the predicted main effect for the love/affection manipulation $F(1,144) = 21.3, p < .001$. There also was a main effect for explicitness, $F(1,144) = 28.7, p < .001$, a main effect for gender $F(1,144) = 4.48, p < .05$, and a love/affection by explicitness interaction, $F(1,144) = 11.0, p < .01$. Tests for simple effects on this interaction revealed that though subjects viewing the high explicitness

Table 2
Mean Ratings of Explicitness

	Love/Affection* in Low Explicitness** Condition		Love/Affection* in High Explicitness** Condition	
	Low	High	Low	High
Gender				
Males	2.89	3.52	4.00	4.47
Females	3.53	3.24	4.58	5.33

Notes: Mean for Males--3.71; Mean for Females--4.13 ns;
Mean for Low Explicit condition--3.32; Mean for
High Explicit condition--4.50; Mean for Low
Love/Affection--3.78; Mean for High Love
Affection--4.03.

Larger numbers indicate greater ratings of
explicitness.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .001$

Table 3
Mean Ratings of Love/Affection

	Love/Affection* in Low Explicitness* Condition		Love/Affection* in High Explicitness* Condition	
	Low	High	Low	High
Gender*				
Males	4.67	5.31	2.82	4.41
Females	5.21	5.09	3.33	5.31

Note: Larger numbers indicate greater ratings of love/affection.

* $p < .05$.

videos (Table 4) were able to significantly distinguish the love/affection difference between the high and low love/affection conditions (4.87 vs. 3.07), a statistically significant difference in love/affection ratings was not observed among those viewing the low explicitness videos (4.97 vs. 5.17) (Table 5).

The results of the manipulation checks made it clear that the independent variables, explicitness and love/affection, were not, in fact, truly independent in this study, despite the fact that (1) extensive pretesting was conducted on the materials in an attempt to create such independence and (2) objective content analysis of the actual acts (i.e., hugging and kissing) portrayed in each segment suggested that verbal and nonverbal displays of love and affection were substantially different under both the low and high explicitness conditions. One possible explanation for the subjects' failure to detect the manipulation in the low explicitness videos was the presence of a ceiling effect. Ratings of love and affection in the low explicitness video were higher in general than ratings of love and affection in the high explicitness video (5.08 vs. 3.78). It is possible that subjects (using a 7-point Likert scale) chose not to assign ratings greater than 5 to sexually explicit films regardless of what the objective content of the video was. That is, subjects possibly were reluctant to describe sexually explicit

Table 4
Mean Ratings of Love/Affection Under
the High Explicit Condition

	Love/Affection*	
	Low	High
Gender*		
Males	2.84	4.42
Females	3.34	5.34

Note: Larger numbers indicate greater ratings of love/affection.

* $p < .01$.

Table 5
Mean Ratings of Love/Affection Under
the Low Explicit Condition

	Love/Affection <u>ns</u>	
	Low	High
Gender <u>ns</u>		
Males	4.65	5.29
Females	5.19	5.08

Note: Larger numbers indicate greater ratings of love/affection.

videos as being romantic. Another possible explanation for the fact that subjects were not able to detect a love/affection manipulation under the low explicitness condition concerned the number of verbal expressions of affection present in each segment. Content analysis of the segments revealed that the difference (between low and high love/affection conditions) in the number of verbal expressions of affection was much greater in the high explicitness video segments. Perhaps verbal displays of love and affection were particularly salient variables in the subjects' ratings of love/affection displayed in a segment.

Alternatively, perhaps it was not possible to manipulate these two variables (love/affection and explicitness) independently. Implications of the discrepancy between the manipulation check using content analysis and the manipulation check using subject ratings of the independent variables are explored in Chapter 4.

Given the results of the formal tests of the effectiveness of the experimental manipulations, it was decided to evaluate the effects of the love/affection manipulation on the main dependent variable, subjective sexual arousal, separately in the high and low explicitness conditions. Further, because the love/affection manipulation proved to be nonambiguous only with the high explicitness videos, this area was expected to provide the

greatest substantiations in the meaningfulness of the results of this primary analysis.

High Explicit Videos

The effects of the love/affection manipulation on estimates of subjective sexual arousal under the high explicit condition (Table 5) were evaluated using a 2 (high vs. low love/affection) X 2 (gender) ANCOVA, with subjective arousal to the experimental video as the dependent variable and two covariates: subjective arousal to the baseline video and sexual attitudes (SOS). Results revealed (as shown previously in Tables 3, 4) a significant main effect for the love/affection manipulation, $F(1.67) = 7.21$, $p < .01$. Subjects viewing the high love/affection video rated it as more sexually arousing than those viewing the low love/affection video (4.13 vs. 3.17). There were no other significant main effects or interactions.

Low Explicit Videos

An analysis was also performed on ratings of sexual arousal to the low explicit videos. Once again, the effects of the love/affection manipulation on estimates of subjective sexual arousal were investigated using a 2 (high vs. low love/affection) X 2 (gender) ANCOVA, with subjective arousal to the experimental video as the dependent variable and two covariates: Subjective arousal

Table 6
Mean Subjective Sexual Arousal Under
the High Explicit Condition

	Love/Affection*	
	Low	High
Gender <u>ns</u>		
Males	3.15	4.00
Females	3.34	4.12

Note: Larger numbers indicate ratings of greater sexual arousal.

* $p < .01$.

Average cell standard deviation = 1.28.
There is no evidence for heterogeneity
of covariance.

to the baseline video and SOS scores. Results revealed no significant main effects or interactions (Table 7).

Subject Predictions

In this study, subjects were asked not only about their subjective sexual arousal to each vignette but also how they believed men and women (in general) would respond to the material. For purposes of comparing subject predictions with their actual responses to the videos, these data were also analyzed using subjects' predictions with regard to the high explicit videos.

Predictions of Women's Arousal

A 2 (subject gender) X 2 (love/affection) ANCOVA was performed using subjects' prediction of women's arousal to the vignette as the dependent variable and subjects' prediction of women's arousal to the baseline video segment as the covariate (Table 8). Results revealed a main effect for subject gender, $F(1, 69) = 7.62$, $p < .01$, with female subjects predicting that women, in general, would be more sexually aroused by the segment than the male subjects predicted they would be (4.32 vs. 3.49). A significant main effect was also observed for the love/affection manipulation, $F(1, 69) = 9.54$, $p < .01$, with all subjects predicting that women, in general, would exhibit greater sexual arousal to the high than to the low love/affection video (4.47 vs. 3.47). No other main effects or

Table 7
Mean Subjective Sexual Arousal Under
the Low Explicit Condition

	Love/Affection	
	Low	High
Gender		
Males	4.14	4.45
Females	4.14	3.86

Note: Larger numbers indicate ratings of greater sexual arousal.

Table 8
Predictions of Women's Arousal to
High Explicit Videos

	Love/Affection *	
	Low	High
Gender *		
Males	3.20	4.02
Females	3.93	4.86

Note: Larger numbers indicate predictions of greater arousal.

* $p < .01$.

interactions reached statistical significance in this analysis.

Predictions of Men's Arousal

A 2 (subject gender) X 2 (love/affection) ANCOVA was also performed using subjects' prediction of men's (in general) arousal to the vignette as the dependent variable and two covariates: subjects' prediction of men's arousal to the baseline and SOS scores (Table 9). This analysis also yielded a statistically significant effect for subject gender, $F(1,70) = 4.44$, $p < .05$, with female subjects predicting that men, in general, would be more aroused than the male subjects predicted they would be (5.53 vs. 4.12). No other main effects or interactions were observed in this analysis.

Table 9
Predictions of Men's Arousal to
High Explicit Videos

	Love/Affection <u>ns</u>	
	Low	High
Gender*		
Males	4.41	4.59
Females	5.20	5.00

Note: Larger numbers indicate predictions of greater arousal.

* p <.05.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

The results of the present study suggest that males and females are similar in their response to displays of love and affection in sexually explicit audio-visual materials. Specifically, both men and women reported being more aroused by the high love/affection theme video rather than the same sexual material portrayed without these romantic themes. These findings are in contrast to those of survey research that found only females to be more sexually aroused to romantic displays in erotica (Kinsey et al., 1953). The results of the present study are also unlike most of the experimental data (Jakobovits, 1965). One exception to this is a recent study that utilized a methodology similar to that of the present investigation (Fisher & Byrne, 1978). In both of these studies, males reacted more similarly to females than was predicted.

Methodological Issues

The diversity in findings among the surveys and studies previously conducted in this area encourages exploration of the methodology utilized in each of these studies as a possible explanation for the varied results. Several possible aspects of the paradigms may be partially

responsible for their findings and include (1) the stimulus materials that were utilized and (2) the subjects studied.

Stimulus Materials

The wide range of modalities used for stimulus presentation in the investigation of responses to erotica may help account for the heterogeneous results. Audiotapes, videotapes, photographs, films and literature have all been utilized as stimulus material. As previously mentioned, the mode of stimulus presentation can have important effects on the magnitude of sexual arousal elicited (Abel et al., 1975; Sakheim et al., 1985; Sandford, 1974). Such difference in arousal could result in differential ceiling effects that might mask the effectiveness of experimental manipulations. It is also quite possible that thematic content may have different effects depending on the nature of the media in which they are portrayed. For example, the effects of a romantic theme could be quite different when presented in a film rather than in an audiotape.

Three of the studies mentioned thus far have utilized erotic literature as the sexual stimulus (Englar & Walker, 1973; Jakobovits, 1965; Schmidt et al., 1973). Two of these studies found no main or interactive effects of gender and romantic theme while Jakobovits (1965) found that females preferred low (over high) love/affection themes. Only Heiman (1977) utilized audiotapes as the means

for eliciting arousal. However, the study found no main effect for romantic theme. Because this study only utilized females as subjects, it is impossible to speculate as to how males would have responded to the audio taped manipulations.

The only studies to date that investigated sexual response to love and affection portrayals, using films or videos as the stimulus material, are those by Fisher and Byrne (1978) and the present investigation. In both studies, only a main effect for romantic theme was found (i.e., both male and female subjects responded with equally greater, self-reported sexual arousal to depictions of love/affection in sexual videos than to a video without this theme). There may well be a uniqueness in media pertaining to explicit videos, so that both men and women respond positively when romantic themes are manipulated. One possibility is that video portrayals of sexual interactions, by their very nature, are usually much more explicit than other types of media (i.e., audiotapes). In fact, it may be possible that within the context of such an explicit portrayal, a romantic buffer is necessary to facilitate arousal. That is, in explicit media, a romantic element may serve to decrease any discomfort (i.e., guilt) experienced over being sexually aroused to such a stimulus. Thus, with sex occurring against a romantic backdrop, subjects are able to become (or admit to becoming) sexually

aroused without feeling guilty. Partial support for this hypothesis can be found in the present study in which there is no main effect on arousal for manipulated love and affection when using the low explicitness video. That is, the presence of a love/affection theme does not serve to facilitate arousal in the low explicitness video segments. A love and affection theme may not be necessary to facilitate sexual arousal when the level of explicitness is sufficiently low. However, because it is unclear as to whether subjects were even able to detect the love/affection manipulation in the low explicitness segments, the precise meaning of this finding is uncertain.

Subjects

Another potentially important difference in research conducted in this area concerns the subject populations utilized. All of the experimental studies cited thus far, aside from Jakobovits (1965), used college students as subjects while the survey research relied on a more diverse sample of adults from the general population. This difference may be important when one considers that some research indicates that college males may possess more liberal attitudes (toward sex as well as other issues) than their noncollege peers (Faulkender, 1987; Lachar, 1974). The hypothesized sex difference in response to sexually explicit materials when romantic theme is manipulated (i.e., women affected, but not men) may exist outside of a

college sample, as the survey data would seem to indicate, yet not within one. Nontraditional or androgynous males (who comprise a college sample) may respond more similarly to females than their older, more traditional, sex-typed peers. However, because there is heterogeneity in findings even within studies that utilized college samples, the population used only partially can help to explain variability in results.

Relevance of Theory

Social learning theory, which was briefly described in Chapter 1, was seen as consistent with the early survey data that suggested a sex difference in response to the expression of love and affection in erotica. However, because laboratory research failed to support these sex differences, this model now appears to be inconsistent with empirical findings. There are at least two potential explanations for this. First, it is possible that this theory never was applicable to the process of becoming aroused to sexually explicit stimuli. That is, social learning theory may be relevant in helping to explain the development of sexual behavior with a partner yet may have little to say about responses to erotica. It is possible that the mechanisms involved in sexual arousal to erotica may bear little or no relation to those involved in other sexual behaviors. Therefore, it is possible that new theory is needed to account for sexual arousal to erotica.

However, a second possible explanation may be that social learning theory is relevant, saying more about the process (as opposed to content) of learning. As described in Chapter 1, social learning is a process that passes on certain behaviors within a culture. That is, through reinforcement, punishment, and modeling, certain behaviors are expressed with great frequency while others become extinct. While the process of social learning may be stable over time, it is likely that the specific behaviors modeled and rewarded (i.e., content) will change as society's values change. In particular, the sexual behaviors modeled and reinforced in contemporary society may be different from those that were sanctioned and rewarded as recently as 20 or even 10 years ago. Males and females may well be acting out different sexual scripts than did their parents or older siblings.

There are several possible explanations for such a change in sexual scripts. For instance, practical aspects of mating in the 1990s may be shaping sexual behavior. The widespread incidence of sexually transmitted disease (particularly those that are nonapparent, nontreatable, or even fatal) may serve as a barrier against indiscriminate sexual behavior in males. Similarly, recent court decisions forcing unwed fathers to assume financial liabilities for their offspring may also change attitudes pertaining to indiscriminate mating. Such changes in

attitudes and behaviors may be translated into different arousal patterns (i.e., greater arousal to video segments where love/affection themes are evident) to sexually explicit video segments.

Evidence consistent with a change in sexual scripts (for males) in recent years can be found in the present study. As part of this investigation, subjects (both males and females) predicted that their male peers would not be affected by manipulations of love/affection (although in fact, the males were). However, they also predicted that females would show an increase in sexual arousal when love/affection themes were introduced into the depiction. That is, subjects predicted that males and females would respond in the way that this study hypothesized. However, only the female subjects responded in the manner that all subjects predicted. Subject predictions could be regarded as an indicator of the subjects' view of past sexual scripts. Thus, a discrepancy between their predictions and their actual responses may suggest that their sense of previous sexual scripting was somehow different from how it was when they gave actual responses. These data may be suggestive of a cultural change in sexual scripts. At any rate, it is clear that more research is necessary in order to investigate: (1) Whether sexual scripts for men have, in fact, been changing and (2) the forces that shape these changes.

Limitations of the Present Study

There are several factors of the present study which may limit its generalizability and conclusions. The results of the manipulation check suggested that subjects were not able to detect a difference in love/affection displays in the low explicitness video. It is unclear why this happened only in the low explicitness video (subjects were able to detect the manipulation of love/affection themes in the high explicitness video). The fact that content analysis indicated that there were objective differences in romantic displays between the two videos makes the picture even more confusing. Perhaps the completely independent manipulation of explicitness and love/affection was not possible because, traditionally, they were linked so dramatically. The more explicit sexual depictions (i.e., pornography) tend to be the least romantic. At any rate, it was not possible to study the interactive effects of love/affection and explicitness in the present study. It may be necessary that future researchers make the manipulated love/affection differences even greater in a low explicit film in order to increase the chances of this difference being detected by subjects. A within-subject design may facilitate this by providing each subject with a basis for comparison.

Furthermore, the present study utilized college students as subjects. The limits of using a college sample

are well known. It is difficult to determine how a more diverse sample would have responded to the videos that were presented. In fact, as mentioned earlier, research demonstrated that college males differed from the general population on characteristics such as androgyny (Faulkender, 1987; Lachar, 1974). In fact, it is likely that noncollege males may respond differently to love/affection themes in sexually explicit videos.

Suggestions for Future Research

Additional research is necessary in order to draw any valid conclusions concerning the nature of gender differences in sexual response to sexually explicit videos. Many of the remaining questions in this area could be partially answered with an experimental study that addressed many of the limits in the data described thus far. In particular, a study that utilized more than one mode of stimulus presentation (e.g., videos and literature) and utilized a greater variety of subjects (e.g., college students and subjects from the community) would be a logical step.

Furthermore, the theories that are often used to explain these data must be examined as to their relevance. It is possible that social learning theory is not useful in the study of sexual behavior (or, more specifically, in the study of responses to X-rated videos). However, it seems necessary to reexamine the assumptions as to the

characteristics and behaviors that are currently being modeled and reinforced. In this dynamic society, it is possible that traditional ways must be abandoned in order to make way for new processes of thinking, organizing, and explaining sexual phenomena.

Please answer all questions, even though you may believe that they do not apply (unless you find a particular question objectionable).

1. How sexually arousing did you find this segment?

Not Arousing							Very Arousing
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

2. How attractive to you was the male performer in this segment?

Not Attractive							Very Attractive
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRES

3. How attractive to you was the female performer in this segment?

Not Attractive							Very Attractive
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

4. How attractive to you was the film set of this segment?

Not Attractive							Very Attractive
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

5. Overall, how would you rate the acting in this segment?

Not Effective							Very Effective
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Please answer all questions, even though you may believe that they do not apply (unless you find a particular question objectionable).

1. How sexually arousing did you find this segment?

Not Arousing					Very Arousing	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

2. How attractive to you was the male performer in this segment?

Not Attractive					Very Attractive	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

3. How attractive to you was the female performer in this segment?

Not Attractive					Very Attractive	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

4. How attractive to you was the film set of this segment?

Not Attractive					Very Attractive	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

5. Overall, how would you rate the acting in this segment?

Not Effective					Very Effective	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

6. Overall, how would you rate the quality of dialogue in this segment?

Poor Quality					Good Quality	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

7. Overall, how pleasant to you was this segment?

Very Unpleasant			Neutral		Very Pleasant	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

8. How romantic to you was this segment?

Not Romantic					Very Romantic	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

9. How explicit to you was this segment?

Not Explicit					Very Explicit	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

10. How much love and affection did this couple display?

None					A Great Deal	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

11. How important to this couple was love and affection in their sexual relationship?

Not Important					Very Important	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

12. How long do you think this couple was together prior to the sexual encounter portrayed in the video?

Less Than One Week					Several Years	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

13. How long do you think this couple will stay together in a relationship following this sexual encounter?

Less Than One Week

Several Years

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

14. How similar was this couple's sexual relationship to one you had in the past?

Not Similar

Very Similar

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

15. How similar was this couple's sexual relationship to one which you may imagine having?

Not Similar

Very Similar

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

16. How arousing do you think this segment is to men (in general)?

Not Arousing

Very Arousing

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

17. How arousing do you think this segment is to women (in general)?

Not Arousing

Very Arousing

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

18. What effect, if any, did the presence of other individuals in the room have on your arousal when viewing this segment?

Not Effective

Very Effective

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

19. Please write any comments you have about any of the above factors which may have particularly influenced your arousal to this video?

Gender

Age

Marital
Status

1. How would you rate your preference in sexual partners?
 20. If there are additional factors which you believe may have influenced your arousal, please indicate them here.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

2. Have you ever before seen a sexually explicit film?

Yes

No

If yes, under what circumstances?

3. How religious do you consider yourself?

Not Religious

Somewhat Religious

Very Religious

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

4. To what religion do you belong?

5. Please circle the number of partners with whom you have engaged in sexual intercourse.

None

1-2

3-5

6-10

11 or More

6. How important do you consider love and affection to be in your own sexual relationship?

Not Important

Very Important

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

GenderAgeMarital
Status

1. How would you rate your preference in sexual partners?

Exclusively Opposite
Sex Partners

About The
Same For
Both Sexes

Exclusively Same
Sex Partners

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

2. Have you ever before seen a sexually explicit film?

Yes

No

If yes, under what circumstances?

3. How religious do you consider yourself?

Not Religious

Somewhat Religious

Very Religious

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

4. To what religion do you belong?

5. Please circle the number of partners with whom you have engaged in sexual intercourse.

None 1-2 3-5 6-10 11 or More

6. How important do you consider love and affection to be in your own sexual relationship?

Not Important

Very Important

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Sexual Opinion Questionnaire

Please write your response to the left of each item.

Agree		Neither Agree Or Disagree		Disagree
1	2	3	4	5
				6
				7

1. I believe that it would be very entertaining to view hard-core pornography.
2. Pornography is obviously filthy; people should not try to describe it as anything else.
3. Swimming in the nude with a member of the opposite sex would be an exciting experience.
4. Masturbation can be an exciting experience.
5. If I found that a close friend of mine was homosexual, I would be annoyed.
6. If people thought that I was interested in oral sex, I would be embarrassed.
7. Engaging in group sex is an interesting idea.
8. I personally find that thinking about engaging in sexual intercourse is arousing.
9. Seeing a pornographic movie would be sexually arousing to me.
10. Thoughts that I may have homosexual tendencies would not worry me at all.
11. The idea of me being physically attracted to members of the same sex is not depressing.
12. Almost all pornographic material is nauseating.
13. It would be emotionally upsetting to me to see individuals publicly exposing themselves.

14. Watching a go-go dancer of the opposite sex would not be very exciting.
15. I would not enjoy seeing a pornographic movie.
16. When I think about seeing pictures showing someone of the same sex as myself masturbating, it nauseates me.
17. The thought of engaging in unusual sex practices is highly arousing.
18. Manipulating my genitals would probably be an arousing experience.
19. I do not enjoy daydreaming about sexual matters.
20. I am not curious about explicit pornography.
21. The thought of having long-term sexual relations with more than one sex partner is not disgusting to me.

Subjects in this study will be viewing, in groups of three to six individuals, three videotaped sequences lasting approximately three to four minutes each. Each segment will show a couple engaging in a variety of sexual behaviors. Some of these scenes will depict, in graphic detail, sexual activities (i.e., intercourse, oral-genital contact) between a man and a woman.

After viewing each segment, subjects will be asked to complete a brief questionnaire regarding their reactions to the scene. They also will be asked to complete a questionnaire covering their attitudes about a variety of sexual issues (i.e., how much pornography,

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM

Subjects may discontinue their participation in this study at any time and receive credit proportional to the amount of time they were in the study. Of course, they are free to refrain from answering any questions that would create discomfort. Confidentiality will be maintained by not placing individuals' names on the completed questionnaires. Only subject identification numbers will be used and these numbers will not be associated with the names of the subjects.

I have read the above description of the study and consent to participation.

Name

Date

Date of Birth

Subjects in this study will be viewing, in groups of three to six individuals, three videotaped sequences lasting approximately three to four minutes each. Each segment will show a couple engaging in a variety of sexual behaviors. Some of these scenes will depict, in graphic detail, sexual activities (i.e., intercourse, oral-genital contact) between a man and a woman.

After viewing each segment, subjects will be asked to complete a brief questionnaire regarding their reactions to the scene. They also will be asked to complete a questionnaire covering their attitudes about a variety of sexual issues (i.e., homosexuality, pornography, masturbation). Subjects may discontinue their participation in this study at any time and receive credit proportional to the amount of time they were in the study. Of course, they are free to refrain from answering any questions that would create discomfort. Confidentiality will be maintained by not placing individuals' names on the completed questionnaires. Only subject identification numbers will be used and these numbers will not be associated with the names of the subjects.

I have read the above description of the study and consent to participation.

Name

Date

Date of Birth

Thank you for participating in the study "Reactions to Erotica." The purpose of this study is to aid in the gathering of normative data concerning the types of sexually explicit material which individuals find most arousing. Data such as these are useful in sex therapy when a couple complains of a desire or arousal problem. It is helpful to therapists to know what arouses individuals of similar demographic backgrounds so that they can assist couples in finding solutions to their problems. This research is helpful because therapists frequently assign sexually explicit films to couples complaining of one of these problems. Furthermore, it is useful to know what most people find arousing so that it can be determined what types of arousal are deviant.

APPENDIX C

DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

Information such as research gathered within this study can help in the identification of sex offenders (i.e., rapists, child molesters). Typically, sex offenders are shown films like the ones you have just seen as well as films containing sexual violence. Arousal to inappropriate films (i.e., ones depicting sexual violence) is usually interpreted as deviant and may serve as evidence for the conviction of individuals who have committed sex crimes.

Thank you for participating in the study "Reactions to Erotica." The purpose of this study is to aid in the gathering of normative data concerning the types of sexually explicit material which individuals find most arousing. Data such as these are useful in sex therapy when a couple complains of a desire or arousal problem. It is helpful to therapists to know what arouses individuals of similar demographic backgrounds so that they can assist couples in finding solutions to their problems. This research is helpful because therapists frequently assign sexually explicit films to couples complaining of one of these problems. Furthermore, it is useful to know what most people find arousing so that it can be determined what types of arousal are deviant.

Information such as research gathered within this study can help in the identification of sex offenders (i.e., rapists, child molesters). Typically, sex offenders are shown films like the ones you have just seen as well as films containing sexual violence. Arousal to inappropriate films (i.e., ones depicting sexual violence) is usually interpreted as deviant and may serve as evidence for the conviction of individuals who have committed sex crimes.

Please do not discuss this study with others so that all subjects enter this experiment without a set of presuppositions regarding what will happen to them. It is important to this research that subjects enter this study knowing only what has been indicated to them on the sign-up sheet.

Also, please understand that there are many possible responses to the stimuli which was just presented and that there are no right or wrong ways to respond. All individuals are different and it is likely that your responses to the questionnaire are completely unique.

Thank you for your participation.

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